1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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Some of the people looked very serious and shaking their heads, said I would see before long, that somebody would pay for it. Two or three weeks after, a fine little Indian boy whom I had with me as a servant, poisoned himself by eating excessively of a kind of wild almond called variously the "bri-bri," or "eboe" nut. There was not an Indian in that party but who firmly believed that it was the *bu-ku-ru'* of the blow-guns that killed him. From all the foregoing, it would seem that *bu-ku ru'* is a sort of evil spirit that takes possession of the objects, and resents being disturbed; but I have never been able to learn from the Indians that they consider it so. They seem to think of it as a property the object acquires. But the worst *bu-ku-ru'* of all, is that of a young woman in her first pregnancy. She infects the whole neighborhood. Persons going from the house where she lives, carry the infection with them to a distance, and all the deaths or other serious misfortunes in the vicinity are laid to her charge. In the old times, when the savage laws and customs were in full force, it was not an uncommon thing for the husband of such a woman to be obliged to pay damages for casualties thus caused by his unfortunate wife. *Nya* (literally filth) is a much less serious affair. As soon as the woman is delivered of her child, she ceases to be *bu-ku-ru'*, but becomes *nya* and has to be purified in the manner already described. All the objects that have been in contact with a person just dead, are *nya* and must be either thrown away, destroyed, or purified by a 'doctor.' He can handle them, but must purify himself afterwards. The persons who assist in preparing the corpse, who carry it to the temporary resting-place, or who even accidentally touch it or the unclean things, are all *nya* and must be purified.

Purification from this latter uncleanness is a simple matter. The person washes his hands in a calabash of warm water, the "doctor" blows a few whiffs of tobacco-smoke over him, and the thing is done. But the former is much more serious. For three days the patient eats no salt in his food, drinks no chocolate, uses no tobacco, and if a married man, sleeps apart from his wife. At the expiration of that time, the warm water and tobacco smoke are called into requisition and the cleansing is complete.

Of Gods, deities, spirits, or devils, there are as follows; the "great spirit" or principal superhuman being is called *Si-bu'* by the Bri-bris and by the Cabecars; by the Tiribis he is called *Zi-bo'*, by the Terrabas *Zũ-bo'* and by the Boruca, *Si'-bŏk*. A good spirit, from whom nothing is to be feared, he receives a sort of passive respect, but no adoration or worship. He is rather looked on as the chief of the good country, of the future state, but as not troubling himself much about mundane matters. It will be seen, therefore, that in their theology, the entire family of tribes is essentially monotheistic, although they have taken the first insensible step towards a plurality of gods, in the manner so admirably indicated by Max Müller, in his "Chips from a German Workshop." They believe in but one God, and assert his unity with an emphasis worthy of Moslems

[P. 26(A)]

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Past	Present	Future
5 days past *skɛ̀Li*		5 days after today *skɛ̀iki*
6 days past *sérik*		6 days after today *seriki*

805
192

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP of P. 26(B)--Qualyst]

LIFE CYCLE

784
[182]
[756]
184
[609]

All events of life are bound by tabus and fear, and of necessity these occasions require the aid of the medicine man. Even on the Pacific slope where custom is less rigid, certain prohibitions and laws continue, although they are not freely discussed nor is their practise admitted to strangers.

843

Pre-natal. Both Gabb [98] and Pittier [99] have called attention to the fact that the Bribri believe that an unborn child can be influenced by certain objects seen or objects worn by the woman around her waist. This is not limited to the Bribri, however, but is also characteristic of the Cabécar. In addition to the information given by the above-mentioned authors, there are many more superstitions, some of which are cited below. Pregnant women cannot participate when certain types of poison are used for fishing (*see* Fishing),

[753]

nor can they cut cacao trees. If they cut such a tree, when it is time for the child to die, he will wilt from the waist down in slow agony and will then require the aid of a medicine man to die (*see* Curing). A pregnant woman cannot eat from a pot, only from a leaf or a plate. If she fails to obey this rule, her child will be stupid or stricken dumb and not even the medicine man can cure him. If she eats

[825]

perico ligero (sloth) it means that her family will be valiant and hard to kill. If the man is an *okɨm* (*see* Death), he cannot bury while his wife is pregnant. There is also the belief

●[761]

that the first time a girl is in this state someone has to die. Occasionally, therefore, the family of a dead person search for a girl in her first pregnancy and a fight with her family ensues.

[184]

This does not happen on the Pacific side.

[262]

Tapir meat is tabu. Some months before birth, the medicine man gives the expectant

[TEXT CONTINUES middle of P. 26(B)--Qualyst]

[98] Gabb, 1875, p. 494.

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805 On the Pacific side, the school has been
192 responsible for the use of the European divi-
177 sions.* These have been incorporated into the local tongue, e.g., *nomingoét*, which literally is "Sunday" from the Spanish *domingo*, and *ét*, the Bribri "one." This means one week.

* [i.e.: divisions of time - Analyst.]

LIFE CYCLE

843 mother a drink made from barks and herbs which is supposed to stop the lochia.

844 Birth. Birth itself must take place unattended
[343] in a separate house made by the father of leaves or branches and located beside a running stream or at least a water hole. The woman, once she enters this shelter, must be seen by no one until the medicine man prepares her after everything is over. The belief is that a
[826] woman about to bear has four eyes, and if any
761 person or animal sees her in this state, he will die. Food is carried to her in a leaf which
[264] must be buried as soon as it has served its purpose so that neither animal nor human being can walk on it. If this should happen, the mother would have a violent stomach-ache. The bringer of the food, usually an old woman, must turn her face away so as not to look as she gives it, and must take pains not to
[262] touch the mother. Salt, chocolate, tapir, and pork are tabu during this period.

Birth is given in a stooping position. The umbilical cord is cut with a knife fashioned from the tender part of wild cane or from a pig bone, or is crushed with stones. It is tied with cotton thread made especially for this purpose (*see* Fibers). The umbilical cord and the afterbirth are buried where the child is born. It is believed that if another spot is chosen, the child will roam away from his mother. After the cord is tied, he is washed in the stream. Among the Caribbean Cabécar, the
846 woman stays isolated for eight days: four in the birth shelter, and four in the house. For the first four days, an old woman brings the
[824] mother a hot liquid made from the bark of trees, in particular that of *kaoli* (*Phoebe mexicana*), with which to bathe herself and the child. When she returns to the house, she

** Pittier, 1938, p. 23.

584 asks his parents. There have been a few cases in this area when permission was denied. Then,
[583] the couple ran away to other indigenous communities of different tongues, for example, the Cabécares among the Bribri or vice versa. The writer does not know of similar cases in Talamanca.

589 When the answer is satisfactory, the couple
591 live from eight days to one year in trial marriage in the house of the girl. The boy works for her family cultivating the land, chopping wood, etc., until he takes his woman away to his parents' home. He must also give the girl material for dresses which she makes into clothes. If he already has a wife then he gives
[595] a present of food or animals to the new woman's family and visits her periodically until he feels it is time to take her to his home or his parents' home.

583 On the Pacific side, social pressure against
[184] trial marriages is at times evidenced by the contemporaries of the couple, not by their
[177] elders. This is due to the influence of the school. Here when first married, the pair
591 generally stay in the house of the father of the boy, although this is not a set rule. The length of time they live there depends upon the father's age. However, from six to eight years is not uncommon. If the mother of the girl is poor and a widow, the couple go to live with her. If while living with either family on the Pacific slope, one of the pair does not get along with the prospective in-laws, they build a house apart but close to the parents. Eventually on this site, the man builds his own home.

595 In Ujarrás, there are several cases among the Cabécares of a woman and two or three men living in the same house. The woman washes and cooks only when she feels like it. When she doesn't the men take care of her.

586 On both sides, the men do not like their women to travel alone for fear they might go off with another man. When a woman leaves her husband, the children stay with the father.

182 **Death and Burial.** The most important phase
● 761 of the life cycle as far as ceremony and prestige are concerned is death. This is when social organization flanked by the unanswerable or mysterious aspects of religion combine
764 in a pageant that might well put to shame many theatrical producers. In the first place, there

*539 776 821 823 [825] *amus*), friends of *sibu*, warn man. This is when the rivers rise. *sibu* then sends *serike* to hunt for the bad spirit and see if he can save human lives. At times, one of *serike's* helpers is the lightning bolt. He also frightens people who try to harm the Indians. This is why when a storm is brewing, first the water birds appear; next the wind blows; and finally the rivers rise and the current roars.

*539 776 821 [825] *serike* chases the water-jaguar from one river to another, over mountains and around rocks. *sibu* gave *serike* a staff to help him in his quest. If this staff is placed on a mountain, immediately a chasm forms causing *dinamą* to move on. The cormorant and kingfisher also tell *serike* where they've seen *dinamą*. This is why there are always a few of these birds on the rocks in the rivers.

Whenever *serike* catches a water-jaguar, he takes him to where the sun rises. There he has a large pot into which he puts *dinamą* and cooks and eats him.

serike is also the hurricane and master of the winds. His mother was killed by the devil who lives above the Coen River on the other side of the range. When *serike* thinks about his mother's death, he becomes furious and blows up the river on his way to fight the devil. Unfortunately, he blows at everything in his path because he wants to fight. Then it is that one [756] [789] of the friends of *serike*, today the *jəwą* (medicine man) but formerly the *usegLa* also, must sing the following song to convince him to stop blowing:

It is not with me
This tree is my fruit
This house is mine
The trees are mine
Go on to fight with others,
This is mine.

[756] [761] Also when there is something making people afraid, or the water-jaguar causes people to drown in a deep pool, the *jəwą* talks to *serike* saying, "Uncle *serike*, here is fear. Come and destroy it."

The next day, *serike* blows and chases away fear. He has been known to destroy a bad pool in one or two years so that *dinamą* (*bák namą*) couldn't drown the people.

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The Myth of the Water-Jaguar[184]

(*Cabécar and Bribri*)

* 539 776 823 *dinamą* is an evil spirit. When the river water is white or milky, it's because *dinamą* has colored himself white. When it becomes a muddy red, it means that he has changed his color. If the rising or flood river is red, however, and not a muddy red, it is because the mother of the river *diminą* is menstruating. There is more than one water-jaguar and they function below large pools or waterfalls or when the rivers are high. Their fangs are large and red, and they have two tails. When a water-jaguar bites trees, as happens in flood times, the trees dry up from the heat of these fangs. When they bite people, they drag them [761] down in the water, drown them, and eat them. It is easy to tell when a water-jaguar has caused a person's death. Their method of killing is to break the front of the skull in two places, and to bite them on the forehead and on the knees.

The first *dinamą* was the grandson of an old woman named *dikú witché*. She was so bad that *sibu* did not allow her to live on earth. Therefore, her home is under the sea where she lives together with her grandson. *dinamą* inherited much of his grandmother's meanness, and she keeps an eye on him. When the surf thunders, it is a sign that he is about to leave the sea and go up the rivers after people. It is his grandmother who makes this noise because she is afraid that he will not return, and she watches at the river mouths to punish him.

(9a, b, and c) The Myth of the Water-Jaguar[185]

(*Cabécar*)

This river flows and goes and where it ends *oLobəsią* is watching that animals do not pass who eat men. When *oLobəsią* grows careless, however, the water-jaguar who eats men [761] passes. It is then that people drown. What

[184] Known also as: *dinamą, bák-namą, ják namá tsirute*, and *dikun* or *dikum*.

[185] *See* Linguistic Texts: *ják namą* (stone-jaguar) *dinamą* (water-jaguar). Also see The Myth of *óknamą* and Linguistic Texts: *ók-nam-qte*.

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* 539 776 823 [761] really happens to them is that they are eaten by the water-jaguar.

oLobəsią becomes aware that *dínamą́* has gone by him to catch men when he notes that the rivers are flooded and wind storms strike. Then he sends one of his subalterns to capture him. This person usually is *serike*. *serike* follows the water-jaguar all over until finally this evil animal hides under the mountain ranges and refuses to come out. At this point *bukubLə* appears to aid *serike* and together they route out the water-jaguar and take him to *oLobəsią*. This personage is delighted and eats the water-jaguar.

(10) *serike* AND *dínamą́*

(*Cabécar*)

* 539 776 823 821 [731] The river flows downward and reaches the mouth where *oLobəsią*[186] stays to support the water. *dínamą́* passes here and eats us when the river is in flood. When there is a bad flood, it carries people away and *dínamą́* eats them.

Then *serike* in the form of a hurricane comes to take him away, hiding him beneath a hill. From here, hurricane carries him to *oLobəsią* to eat.

When hurricane *serike* comes, he arrives with wind and rain, and the river rises. He goes to the King of the Wind to fight because this king carried off his mother to have as a wife.[187] When this happened, hurricane was a child. He did not see his mother carried away. He grew up and learned that his mother had been swallowed. Then the King of the Wind sold everything. This is why hurricane takes everything he finds. He takes the devil to *oLobəsią* for him to eat. When the earth makes a noise, this is *oLobəsią*.

(11) THE MYTH OF *óknamą́te*[188]

(*Cabécar*)

* 539 776 823 761 *óknamą́* is a spirit who protects men. He lives where the rivers meet the sea (at the river's mouth). Pregnant women, however,

[186] *oLo* is buzzard in Cabécar. *sią́* are the sacred stones of the medicine men.

[187] Compare this with "How *serike* got his staff."

[188] *See* Linguistic Texts: *ók-namą́-te* (jaguar he). Also see The Myth of the Water-Jaguar and *onombrawén*, and Linguistic Texts: *di-namą́*.

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*539 776 823 •761 make him sleep. It is then that the water-jaguar takes advantage and goes upstream. He searches for cacao, and when he discovers a well-ripened pod he breaks it open. This is when people drown because the water-jaguar goes from pool to pool inviting them to drink cacao with him. Wise people refuse because they know if they accept, they must die.

The water-jaguar, nevertheless, continues from pool to pool insisting on being accompanied until finally someone approaches and drinks with him. Instead of cacao, however, the liquid is blood from the corpse. Once the feast is over, the empty pod is thrown out of the river. This is when we find the body of the drowned person.

At this very moment, *óknamį* awakes and notes that the water-jaguar has passed him. He realizes this because the plants are spotted.[189] Then he sends *serike* to fetch the water-jaguar and all those who drank cacao with him. When all are in front of *óknamį*, he has them cooked in a large pot and eats the victims and water-jaguar.

(12) *onombrasén*[190]

(*Cabécar*)

*539 776 761 [823] When the rivers rise, the water-jaguar goes up and down inviting people to drink cacao with him. Most people refuse, but he always gets some. It is then that the water-jaguar drinks their blood as if it were cacao.

[825] *onombrasén*, who is a spirit who looks after people, is warned by the cormorant and kingfisher. They tell him where the water-jaguar is drowning people by drinking their blood for cacao.

(13) The Myth of *Mano del Tigre*[191]

(*Cabécar*)

778 103 [133] [487] *Mano del Tigre* is one of the large savannas through which lies the trail from Buenos Aires to Boruca. Curiously enough it is found on almost all the maps of Costa Rica, from the earliest times to the present. There is nothing

[189] After a flood, the water leaves its mark on the vegetation along the river banks. Stone jaguar is sometimes substituted for water jaguar.

[190] *See* Linguistic Texts: *onombrasén*. Compare with The Myth of *óknamįte*.

[191] *See* Linguistic Texts: *namį tš* (jaguar print).

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Non-Theological Tales.

* 539
825

The Grandmother of the Toad

(*Bribri*)

buké winchké is the grandmother of the toad. She lives where the sun sets and is a helper of *sibu*. When he gives her his hand, amoebas come. Therefore, it is impossible to cure them. He who is born to die of amoebas, must do so.

[761]

Why the Toads Have Ugly Buttocks

(*Bribri*)

Long ago the toads liked to dance the Monkey Dance (*see* Dances). This disgusted *sibu* so when they sat down, he partially dried their buttocks making them thinner than the rest of their body.

The Alligator[201]

(*Cabécar*)

The alligator lived in a large pool where he had a balsa (raft). He had a beard and a long tongue to catch whatever he wanted. When he saw people, he would stick out his tongue and pull them in.

sibu was annoyed with this and sent a man to pull the tongue out, giving him his staff to help with the task. The man put the staff on the alligator's tongue and pulled it and the beard out, both of which he gave to the sun to make its rays.

The Iguana

(*Cabécar*)

sibu heard a cry from afar. He told the iguana to find out from whence the cry came. The iguana, however, refused to do *sibu's* bidding. As a punishment, *sibu* beat him. Then the iguana cried, "If you put me in the river, I'll die."

He was put in the river, but he was content, because there he found the alligator, the serpent, and the crab. All were his friends and he liked to stay with them.

[136]

[201] There are no alligators in Costa Rica, only crocodiles.